

chapter 3

Dutch masters





Dutch masters

In the Golden Age of the Republic of the United Seven Provinces of the Netherlands (the Republic), many prolific painters from the Low Countries came to fame. The Dutch masters were especially famous for their wonderful portraits, still lifes and landscapes. This followed the period of more traditional paintings with religious subjects.

The Golden Age was a period spanning the seventeenth century during which the Republic experienced huge prosperity in all aspects of life. The Republic formed during the rebellion of the Provinces of the Low Countries against the Spanish oppression, which started in 1568 and lasted for 80 years until the signing of the Treaty of Munster in 1648. Fortunately, there was a temporary halt on the Span-

ish advance because of the war declared by Spain against the English throne of Queen Elizabeth. That ended in disaster for Philip II with the destruction of the mighty Armada. Spain regained dominance over the southern Netherlands after the fall of Antwerp in 1585.

The secession of the northern seven Provinces of the Netherlands from Spain would lead to an enormous



Elisabeth I, Queen of England, the 'Darnley Portrait' (1575), (National Portrait Gallery)

exodus of protestant intellectuals, merchants and skilled craftsmen from Flanders and Brabant to the northern Republic. They mostly settled in Amsterdam, which became the main city of the Province Holland, known for its religious tolerance and free-thinking.

Other religious refugees settled in cities of Holland, such as Huguenots from France, Jews from Spain and Portugal and Puritans from England. The Pilgrim Fathers from England prolonged their stopover in Leiden. This influx of freethinking intellectuals became the driving force behind the genesis of the Golden Age.

Technical inventions, such as the use of windmills as an efficient source of energy, gave a tremendous boost to economic growth. Manufacturing and trade exploded. The dominance at sea supported by an enormous naval fleet was an added defence for the growing overseas interests of the Republic. Clever cartography and the newly founded United East India Company spurred further growth.

The Dutch monopoly of East-Asian trade amassed huge economic wealth with a modern banking system developing on the capital strength. Another notable event was the establishment of the only trading post by the Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC), the United East India Company on the Japanese mainland at Deshima.

The Dutch dominated naval trade to the Mediterranean and Baltic countries. This created political tensions with neighbouring France and England on top of prolonged confrontations with Spain.

Shipbuilding and sawmilling was big business. Improved dike building and polder techniques made possible improvements of the waterways and domes-



Seige of Anwerp (1585), by Jan Luyken



Map of Deshima (1824), by Isaac Titsingh - VOC trading post in Japan (Koninklijke Bibliotheek, Den Haag)

tic water management. The flourishing Dutch trade produced a substantial class of wealthy merchants and their new prosperity provided financial sponsorship to arts and science.

Religious freedom and political independence resulted in a national consciousness and a reformist nation. A new social structure formed. Wealthy merchants married into the aristocracy and nobility. This new class of burgers governed the cities and controlled all privileges. The influence of the Catholic clergy had decreased with the rise of the Protestant movement asserting its own social control.

Public office was popular as it created a way to power and social status. The new academic universities were the pathway to public office for the new rich. Wealthy young men went on a 'Grand Tour' visiting other European countries and foreign universities. They could mingle with rich patricians and aristocrats abroad before embarking on a successful career at home in the Republic.

Just below this upper crust of new social elite, a wealthy middle class formed consisting of lawyers, physicians, ministers and industrialists. Skilled labourers and craftsmen formed their own social class and organized themselves in various guilds. Impoverished peasants and day labourers were the inevitable paupers of the society.

The Dutch uprising against Philip II had been underestimated. The rebels had been nicknamed as 'des gueux', a French word for beggars. This word, converted to 'De Geuzen', famously stood as a symbol for the victorious national revolt against the Spanish oppression.

Calvinism became the most popular Protestant movement in the Republic, preaching humility as an important virtue counterbalancing the vast riches and bridging the large social differences. This new

Siege of Leiden, illustrated on glass window nr. 25 portraying William of Orange in the foreground honoring the citizens of Leiden, (St John's Church of Gouda - Stichting Fonds Goudse Glazen)





Company of Frans Banning Cocq and Willem van Ruytenburch (also known as *The Night Watch*), by Rembrandt van Rijn commissioned by the Amsterdam company of musketeers Kloveniersdoelen (Rijksmuseum Amsterdam)

form of egalitarianism persisted in society. It became a sanctioned belief and allowed for religious tolerance. There was little tolerance upheld towards the Catholics since the prevailing revolt against hostile Spain. Nevertheless, money could bridge many differences and buy privileges too. The Renaissance humanist

Desiderius Erasmus firmly supported a climate of tolerance. This attracted many scientists and other academic thinkers.

Stadtholder William I, Prince of Orange, established the University of Leiden in 1575 as a token of gratitude for the successful resistance of the tormented citizens of the city of Leiden against the Spanish army's ferocious siege. The university, which laid the foundations of international law and commercial law, became the centre point for these people.

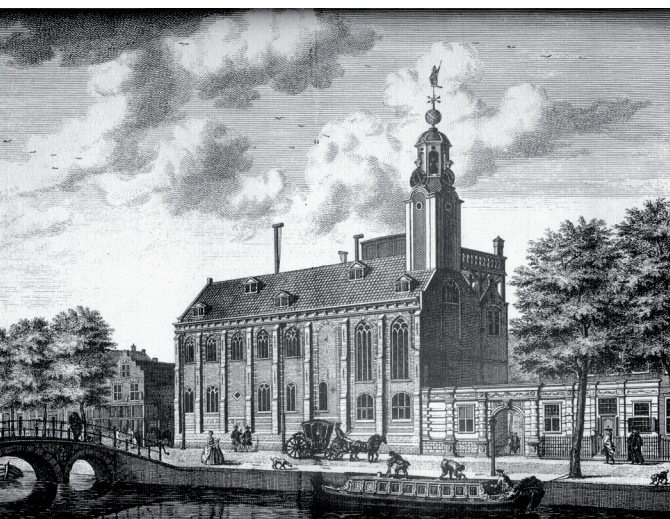
Hugo Grotius developed the legal concept of the free seas – *Mare Liberum* – not always welcomed by contesting neighbours or competitors for dominance of world trade, and on the concept of laws of war and peace – *De Jure Belli ac Pacis*.

The famous astronomer, physicist and mathematician Christiaan Huygens invented the pendulum clock and new techniques towards exact time keeping. Antonie van Leeuwenhoek was the first to study microscopic life methodically. Jan Leeghwater developed hydraulic engineering techniques gaining the upper hand in the battle against the sea and water, a matter of survival for the Low Countries.

During the Golden Age, the Republic became the



William I, Prince of Orange (1623), by Adriaen van de Venne



Academy Building of the University of Leiden



Republic of the Seven United Provinces of the Netherlands (1658), by Jan Janssonius



Leo Belgicus - Novissima et Accuratissima Leonis Belgici (1609), by Claes Janszoon Visscher (Historisch Museum Rotterdam)



Emperor Charles V abdicating in Brussels in 1555 in favor of Philip II, an allegory by Frans Francken (Rijksmuseum Amsterdam)

centre of book publishing on controversial subjects such as religion, philosophy and science. Wealthy merchants and patricians became the patrons of art. Centres of cultural activity were the 'schutterijen' and 'rederijkerskamers'. The schutterij was a town militia created for the town defence and policing. It was also a social society for the well-to-do, proudly portrayed in group-paintings by Frans Hals. The Nightwatch by Rembrandt is another example of a portrayed 'schutterij'. A

'rederijkerskamer' was a literary society of townsmen, that focused on poetry, drama and debating. Dutch painters of the Golden Age became masters of the non-religious still life and landscape genre as well as portraiture. The driving force behind their success was again the group of wealthy merchants. Scenes of everyday life were most popular. Some notable styles include Haarlem Mannerism, Utrecht Caravaggism, the School of Delft, the Leiden 'fijnschilders', and Dutch classicism. Merchants who



Queen Elizabeth feeding, William of Orange milking and King Philip riding the Dutch Cow as the Duke of Anjou gets the dung, a satire by an anonymous artist (c1580-1595)



Games on the Ice - detail, by Pieter Codde



William II, Prince of Orange and Stadtholder of the Republic, with Princess Mary Stuart, by Anthony van Dyck (Rijksmuseum Amsterdam)

had gained fortunes built houses with ornamented facades along the many newly built canals in the cities. In the countryside, they built many richly designed stately homes.

Late Gothic elements combined with Renaissance motives prevailed and were later followed by French classicism. The building of Reformed churches commissioned a new breed of architects. Well-known architects were Jacob van Kampen and Hendrick de Keyser. The latter also became a prominent sculptor of his time. Famous literators of the Golden Age were Joost van den Vondel, Jacob Cats, Pieter

Cornelisz Hooft and Gerbrand Adriaensz Bredero.

The Republic of the United Provinces of the Netherlands existed from 1581 to 1795. Also referred to as the Republic or the United Provinces, the formation of the Republic followed the secession of the seven northern Provinces from the unified seventeen Provinces of the Habsburg Netherlands. These seventeen Provinces correspond with the present day states of the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxemburg. The foundation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in 1814 by the Treaty of Vienna, following the defeat

of Napoleon of France at Leipzig, reunited these seventeen Provinces once more. That is, until Belgium withdrew to becoming an independent kingdom ruled by the Saxe-Coburg House in 1839.

The Burgundy or Habsburg Netherlands, also known as the Low Countries, consisted of many duchies and counties under the supreme rule of the Holy Roman Empire. The Low Countries were initially under the rule of the House of Burgundy and later the House of Habsburg. The Pragmatic Sanction of 1549 by Emperor Charles V unified the seventeen Provinces of the Low Countries under his central rule. Philip II, King of Spain, succeeded him as ruler over the Netherlands.

In 1568 Stadtholder William I, Prince of Orange, led a revolt of the Low Countries against Philip II in protest of the king's efforts to centralize the outdated government structures of the Provinces. His persecution of Protestantism and the introduction of a high taxation of the people to fund his wars against England did not serve his cause either.

This revolt started what we now know as the Eighty Year War from 1568 to 1648. In 1579, several of the northern Provinces of the Netherlands signed the Union of Utrecht, in which they promised to support one another in their defence against the Spanish army. The Act of Abjuration, the declaration of independence of the seven northern Provinces from Philip II, followed in 1581.

After the unfortunate assassination of William of Orange, the Queen of England Elizabeth I agreed in the Treaty of Nonsuch to accept the United Provinces as a protectorate of England. However, the presence of the Duke of Leicester as Governor General of the Northern Netherlands was a great failure.

The seven Provinces decided to go their own way without a royal head of state or the dominant power of the church and formed a Republic in 1588. The Republic, unique in its constitutional form, turned into a huge success in both a political and economic sense. The main province of the new Republic, the Province of Holland, became probably the most urbanized and wealthiest region in Europe establishing a modern banking system and an effective commodities and stock market with new trading principles and techniques.

England and Scotland set up close connections with these newly developed systems and benefited in their own right from them. Official recognition of the Republic as a sovereign nation happened in 1648 at the end of the Eighty Year War with Spain. With the support of a strong naval fleet, the Republic survived as an independent nation for more than 200 years.

The Republic, a confederation of seven autonomous Provinces run by a parliament called the States General had its residence in The Hague. The Provinces were the two counties of Holland and Zeeland, the former bishopric of Utrecht, the duchy of Guelders,



James Stuart II, King of England (c1660) - detail, by Sir Peter Lely (The National Portrait Gallery)



William III, King of England, Ireland and Scotland, Prince of Orange and Stadtholder of the Republic (1650-1702), by Sir Godfrey Kneller

Overijssel, and the free Provinces of Friesland and Groningen. The hereditary Stadtholder, usually of the House of Orange-Nassau, formed a counterbalance to the republican nature of the States General. The addition of a number of border territories, Brabant, Flanders and Limburg to the Republic finally created a complex federal structure. The coat of arms of the Republic has the traditional lion holding seven arrows in its left claw representing the seven Provinces and a sword in the other.

The States General had charge of the powerful Dutch East India Company (VOC) and the West India Company (WIC) and this created a strong fiscal base for its political rule. The adopted state religion was the Dutch Reformed Church.

Catholicism was suspect with public exercise of religion forbidden. Public servants were mostly Calvinist Protestant but Jews too held office. Standard order was to act against 'papist religion'. In practice, the state tolerated secret Catholic worship at the price of a higher taxation and with all churches and monasteries stripped of their previous Catholic character. Calvinism had become the mainstream religion of the Republic and left its mark for the next 200 years although personal freedom of religion remained an important feature of the Republic.

There is hearsay evidence the later American Declaration of Independence of the United States of America had a base in the Act of Abjuration and the Constitution of the Republic of the United Provinces of the Netherlands. Similarities are indeed plentiful although debate on proof of direct influence continues today. John Adams stated, "the history of the one seems but a transcript from that of the other".

Eventually the strong rivalry between the Re-

publican supporters of the States General on one side and the Orangist supporters of the House of Orange-Nassau would create deep divisions in the Dutch society. The Orangists would prevail in the end and restore unity. Stadtholders William II, and more importantly William III, would display great political skills in forming a strong and successful front against seemingly overpowering enemies to survive the 'annus horribilis' of 1672. The Republic battled against the states of France, England, Munster and Cologne at the same time.

The House of Orange-Nassau traditionally preserved close ties with the House of Stuart in Scotland. Both Stadtholders William II and William III were married to Stuart princesses and both princesses had the name Mary Stuart. Earlier Frederik V Elector Palatine and his wife Elizabeth Stuart lived in exile in The Hague. Elizabeth Stuart was the daughter of King James VI of Scotland who later became King James I of England.

In a strange turn of events in the relationship between the Oranges and the Stuarts, English politicians in 1688 called on William III, Stadtholder of the Republic, to help them depose James II because of his unfavourable 'papist' sympathies. James II, the last Stuart King of England and Scotland was also William III's father-in-law and uncle. This would become known as the Glorious Revolution.

The Dutch Stadtholder William III, also called affectionately 'King Billy', with his wife Mary Stuart became King William III and Queen Mary II of England, Scotland and Ireland. The close personal ties between the Stuarts with the noble counts of Holland and Zeeland of the Low Countries go back to the fourteenth and fifteenth century.

The death of William III in 1702 marked the beginning of a slow decline of the Republic as an economic superpower and a major military force. Wars against the expansionist France and England proved too much for a small nation to handle on its own. Fierce trade wars and competition for control over important colonies burdened a country without sufficient natural resources and with insurmountable debts. Three successive Anglo-Dutch wars at sea had a major negative impact on trade and shipping. Gradually Britannia would rule the waves and control its main rival France too.

At the time of the French Revolution, these successive defeats at sea against the English finally bankrupted the Republic. Succeeded by the Batavian Republic in 1795 and then eventually annexed by the French Republic in 1809. The Battle of Waterloo in 1815, in which Britain and the Netherlands fought shoulder to shoulder in an allied Anglo-Dutch army, with Prussia, finally defeated Napoleon and changed the face of Europe. For a short while, the

Winter landscape with colf players and skaters (c1655), by Aert van der Neer (Noortman Master Paintings)





Frozen harbor of Delfshaven (1565), by Cornelis Jacobsz. van Culemborch

northern and southern Netherlands, along the old borders of the Low Countries, were reunited as the new United Kingdom of the Netherlands to form a political buffer between Great Britain, France and the German states.

During the Golden Age period, landscape paintings were of particular interest with the winter landscapes showing day-to-day life and amusements on ice. Many traditional games and pastimes are shown on these paintings, the most popular being the game of colf, 'het spel metten colve'.

This has from time to time led to the mistaken conclusion that the colf game in the Low Countries was a game played on ice only. During winter, the daily pattern of work, more or less came to a standstill and people spent much time outdoors with winter amusements. Of course, harsh winters and freezing temperatures brought their own hardships too.

As we know, the weather can be changeable and unpredictable. There are many discussions directed towards climate change and the effects this may have on day-to-day life. Changes in weather and cold spells had a huge impact in past ages without the advantages of modern technology. Frost and snow often meant complete isolation and could threaten life itself. It influenced transport over water, important in the Low Countries, and the conduct of warfare,

especially during the Eighty Years War of the Netherlands against the Spanish-Habsburg dominance. Northwest-Europe experienced what we now know as the "Little Ice Age" during a period of about one hundred years from 1550 to 1650. About two thirds of the winters were extremely cold and could last for periods of up to nine weeks on end. During this period, the climate would show all its extremes.

The painting of Cornelis van Culemborch pictures the frozen harbour of Delfshaven in Rotterdam with spectacular mountains of drifting ice floes. This also created the opportunity for colf players to have a good swing at the ball too.

Recent climate studies of the past millennium have given evidence of the existence of this Little Ice Age



Winter Landscape with a Frozen River and Figures (c1620), by Hendrick Averkamp



View of Kasteel Batestein in Vianen - detail, by Jan van Goyen

and the extreme climate in that period with extremely low average temperature during winter. Keeping weather statistics and records only began after the seventeenth century. Especially cold were the winters of 1607–1608 and 1620–1621.

These had a bearing on the Twelve Year Truce between the Republic and Spain that had given a breathing space to the nations at war amid the Eighty Year War. At the end of the truce, the Dutch would cut the ice around rivers and canals of their cities to defend against the advancing Spanish armies and to raise the siege. The existence of the newly declared Republic was at stake.

Obviously, there is a relationship between the Little Ice Age and the growing popularity of winter landscape painting during that period. Painters would concentrate on reproducing light and skies true to

nature. Snow and ice brought an extra challenge to the artist's technique. Paintings of winter landscapes became widely popular and desirable.

Of course, these included ice skating, the most traditional of Dutch sports on ice. Pictures show ice skaters skating alone or together in duet, showing the fun but also the dangers of ice. Some ice skaters would take along their colf and play an old form of ice hockey, alone or in groups.

Colf players illustrated mostly did not wear skates. However, colf players did have skates or other protection on if the ice was new and slippery to prevent them from falling while swinging at the ball. Usually colf players would use metal plates with spikes under their shoes to improve grip on the slippery ice. After snowfall covered the ice, colf players had less to worry about.

Another popular game needing clean ice was a game similar to modern curling. In summer, players rolled a 'boal', a flattened round ball of stone or hardwood. In winter, they laid the stone boal on its side with a wooden pen stuck in the middle as a handle to push the boal over the ice towards a certain target. Players called rolling the boal with a slight curve 'krullen'. 'De boal krullen', like in modern day bowls, is most probably the origin of today's curling on ice underscored by the etymology of the word.

It was probably safest to stay inside the house during the cold winters and not challenge the inclement weather. Ice skating was also considered dangerous if not mastered correctly. Poems and songs warned people of the dangers of ice. There is a well-known print by Theodoor Matham, of an Adriaen van de Venne drawing showing a poem by the famous Dutch folklore poet Jacob Cats

Spiegel van den Ouden en Nieuwen Tijden.

'Als den Esel te wel is / soo gaet hy op 't ijs danssen'.

[If an ass is treated too well, he will go dancing on ice.]

In other words, haughtiness does not go unpunished. The illustration shows a colf player even putting his colf and ball aside in an attempt to get the ass with its broken leg back on its feet. But to no avail.

The winter scenes show the pleasures of ice bringing people together and bridging social and class differences. Pictures show aristocrats and peasants



Als den Esel te wel is, soo gaet hy op 't ijs danssen, an illustration in Jacob Cats' Spiegel van den Ouden en Nieuwen Tijd (1632), engraving by Theodoor Matham after Adriaen van de Venne



Winter landscape with enjoyments on ice (c1620), by Hendrick Averkamp

enjoying themselves together, bringing down social barriers even stimulating romance and love. This also made paintings of winter landscapes hugely popular, especially those of Hendrick Averkamp, who created a new style of his own.

Skating on ice has always been a popular pastime for the Dutch living in the Low Countries. Skate makers created a guild of their own. Foreign visitors were often beguiled by the enthusiasm for ice skating and games played on ice during the cold winters. These activities also attracted many spectators with serious betting on games going on. Sledges and horse sleighs on ice became fashionable, often beautifully deco-

rated and pulled by one or more fancy horses. The sleighs also served as a means of transport over the frozen canals. The coldest pastime on ice was probably ice sailing, a recent invention.

Probably the most popular game on ice was colf that reached the peak of popularity in the seventeenth century. The many paintings of winter landscapes with scenes of colf players gives us the opportunity to study the game as it was played and what materials were used.

A colf was made of a single piece of wood (ash) with a piece of metal (lead) fitted around the head of the club as a shoe. Balls in this period were leather balls filled with hair. There were guilds for both colf makers and ball makers.

The game of colf was a long game played towards a target, a wooden post with a nail in the bottom punched through the ice. A helper or marker, like a 'fore caddie', who moved the post to the next position after completion of the previous stretch, carried the post forward. The target post was called a 'buut' (vide French 'but' or Old-Scottish 'butt' meaning target). The modern day golf word 'putt' could well have an etymological derivation from the word 'buut' or 'butt'. Old-Scots would also use the word 'butt' for a target of archery. Similarly it is likely the word 'fore' is in the same sense stemmed from the word 'voor', meaning front. The word 'voor' is also common naval language used as a warning for the man in front at the stern of the ship. In the early game of colf, players used the same word as a warning to anyone ahead.

Sometimes the target was a pole in the ice, or a part of a boat stuck in the ice. The game of colf consisted of both a long game towards a faraway target and a

short game towards the nearby post. Therefore, it was not too different from the modern game of golf played today.

Usually, two players played the game with two balls. Sometimes, three or four players would play the match between themselves. An arbiter checking the score and the honesty of the players accompanied the



Pastime on ice - detail, by Barent Averkamp. Four colf players, two in blue and two in brown suits, a marker in red, two helpers and an onlooker. The last stroke to the target post.



Pastime on ice - detail, by Hendrick Averkamp



Book of Hours (16th century) – detail, unknown artist Flemish School

match. Scores were kept on a stick, a 'kerfstok', with a knife cut marking each stroke. This was necessary because of the large amounts of money bet on the outcome of the game. There is an Old-Dutch expression: 'Hij heeft goed gekolfd', meaning that he has made much money or has done well in life. In addition, one could see someone going to the match with food and beverage to have on the way

during a cold wintry day. A serious match could take some time. The game of colf could be somewhat dangerous for bystanders. It was necessary to pay attention when a colf player was about to take a swing at the ball as showed in the play *Moortje* (1617) of the writer Bredero. *Moortje*, a young lady hit on the head by a colf ball by the river Amstel cries:

"Tis een vreemd dingh, dat van duese weytsche colvers
Die dus int wild toeslaan, geen ong'lucken geschien;
Hadt ick maar iens de macht ick souwt'er wel verbien,
Of ick sou'er een plaats uyt alle menschen wijsen:
Ick selt van mijn leven ky'ren niet aanprijsen.'

[It is strange that these long hitting colf players
Who wildly hit their balls, do not cause more acci-
dents;
If I had the power I would forbid the game,
Or I would designate a place away from people:
I would never recommend it to children.]

In earlier times in the Middle Ages, costly books of hours and prayers, made and decorated with calen-
dars and zodiacs, pictured the seasonal activities of
people, often peasants working the land. In addi-
tion, they pictured the games people played. These
included probably the earliest illustrations of a game
of colf in Europe. They show both varieties: the team
game with one ball (as modern day hockey) or the



Hunters in the snow (1565), by Pieter Bruegel the Older



*Count in Bethlehem (c1605) – detail,
by Pieter Bruegel the Younger*

target game with each player hitting his own ball. These calendar illustrations of colf players would however not be in wintertime on ice but rather on land in summer. In winter, we would see children throwing snowballs. A well-known artist was Simon Bening from the city of Bruges (c 1483–1561).

Pieter Breughel de Oude (c1525–1569) painted the first winter landscape in 1565 setting an example for scores of Dutch masters to come. Brueghel has left us with a legacy of paintings from which we can study the various games played in that time. A milestone in developing winter landscape painting was a series of large-scale paintings by Brueghel. The six panels made for the wealthy Antwerp merchant Nicolaas Jonghelinck, show the various seasons of the year. The winter panel – *Hunters in the snow* shows hunters returning to their village. In the background, people are playing popular games on the frozen lake: skating,



Winter view near Antwerp (1575), by Lucas van Valckenborch

colf, boal, cloet schieten, tollen, etc.

Other paintings by Brueghel picturing life in winter with day-to-day village activities and pastime on the frozen river are well known and copied several times because of the huge popularity in his time. Best known is *Winter landscape with bird trap* (1565) and *The census in Bethlehem* (1566). Even at registration, a peasant is symbolically holding on to his favourite colf while Mary arrives on her donkey.

Brueghel portrays an interesting history of village life and the impact of winter conditions on people

and their everyday life. A centre point of many village scenes is the inn, a gathering point for all during winter amusements. Strangely, a favourite theme of the winter landscape painters was humorously picturing ladies falling while skating and accidentally showing their bare bottoms under their skirts.

Brueghel had many followers, such as Hans Bol, who popularised the many winter landscape themes in the northern Low Countries after the fall of Antwerp to the Spanish army. Famous is the winter landscape painting by Lucas van Valckenborch (1535–1597) of the view of Antwerp and the frozen Scheldt – *Winter landscape of Antwerp* (1575) – a rare illustration of snow falling and a few colf players. They are playing cross-country alongside a watermill, one swinging at the ball and the other showing the way over the frozen waterway. Other players are standing by and watching the result.

It is also common to see villagers relieving themselves out in the open, possibly as a ‘reversed celebration of the winter observation of the fast’. An example of this can be seen in the left hand corner of the painting. The wintry panoramic perspectives of the worldly landscapes of Flemish painters would remain popular for a long time during the seventeenth century and leaves us with valuable information about the village life and times in the southern Low Countries.

The most famous northern Low Countries painter to develop the skills of winter landscape paintings was undoubtedly Hendrick Averkamp, known as “de Stomme” (the Mute) of Kampen, a city on the east side of the Zuider Zee (South Sea). Hans Bol, having fled from Antwerp to Amsterdam, had earlier shown



Winter landscape with skaters and a bird trap (c1605), by Pieter Bruegel the Younger



Colf players on ice – detail, by Esaias van de Velde

Averkamp the way with his painting *Amusement on ice near Amsterdam* (1589), a wonderful miniature with the recognisable profile of Amsterdam (Oude Kerk) in the background. From a high viewpoint, it shows elegantly dressed people busy with winter amusements and games on the frozen river Amstel. On the left, a large group of spectators watched a party of colf players.

Averkamp would follow this traditional set up of the painted winter landscapes with a high viewpoint, high horizon, decorative trees on the side as a coulisse and horizontal planes forming a theatrical scene. Averkamp inspired by David Vinckboons, positioned historic or fantasy castles in the middle of his wintry scenes with anecdotal details.

Another notable in this category is Adriaen van de Venne, who gives us an insight into the life of the



Winter landscape (1630) – detail, by Esaias van de Velde

royal residence of The Hague and the court of the House of Orange. He illustrated the leisure activities of Stadtholders Maurits and Frederik Hendrik, Prince of Orange with his wife Amalia van Solms. He also pictured the Royal guests in exile, Frederik V, Elector of Palatine and King of Bohemia and his wife Elizabeth Stuart, daughter of King James I and VI of England and Scotland.

Frederik and Elizabeth were to live the rest of their



Winter landscape with farmhouse – detail, by Esaias van de Velde

lives in exile in The Hague after losing the throne of Bohemia and the Palatinate. Frederik was a nephew of Prince William I of Orange, known as 'William the Silent', founder of the Republic. They brought a new royal class to the courts of The Hague. Van de Venne would show them engaging in colf and malie as well as other royal sports.

Averkamp and Van de Venne would concentrate more and more on rendering a true reproduction of painted landscapes. They developed this naturalistic style into one of the most popular genres of the North Netherlands painting. Other notable followers are Esaias van der Velde and Jan van Goyen, who made monochrome landscape painting popular. A noticeable absentee from anecdotal winter landscape painting was Rembrandt van Rijn.

Averkamp would change his technique in his later work, moving the horizon lower to increase naturalism with wide views and atmospheric effects. In addition, the figures became larger, creating silhouettes against a wintry background. These are probably the most prolific illustrations of colf players of the seventeenth century in the Low Countries. We now know that Averkamp himself was an avid colf player and often portraying himself playing his favourite game of colf. Followers of Averkamp were Arent Arentz and his nephew Barent Averkamp, who portrayed an exciting 'short putt' of a group of smartly dressed colf players in his *Winter amusement* (1655).

In Amsterdam, two other landscape painters came to fame: Aart van der Neer (c1603-1677) and the younger Jan van Capelle (1626-1679). The effects of different spheres of light fascinated them both. Different types of light, reproduced within wonderful settings, a low wintry sun, a sunrise or sunset, even landscapes in moonlight, often with one colour pallet, ochre or silver grey. Frozen river landscapes with a grand view were favourites. Figures in Van der Neer's paintings played an important role in the storytelling. Very often, these would be colf players on ice, in snowy, cold landscapes.

Adriaen van de Velde (1636-1672) only painted a few



Amusements on ice near Amsterdam (1589), by Hans Bol



Winter scene with colf players, by Jan van Capelle



Ice scene near city wall, by Adriaen van der Velde



Amusements on ice outside the city of Kampen – detail, by Hendrick Averkamp. Averkamp is playing colf with his brother; the score is scratched in the paint left bottom.

winter landscapes, nearly all in 1668 and the year after. Figures would be the central theme in some, the landscape in others. Famous is his painting *Colf players on ice near Haarlem* (1668). In this painting, he may have been the first to paint a Scot wearing a traditional kilt and playing the game of colf. The backdrop is the city of Haarlem with the Great or St. Bavo Church behind the long northern stretch of the river Spaarne.

After most of the well-known winter landscape painters had died, this popular tradition in the Republic during the Golden Age ended in the late seventeenth century. This has left us with a tremendously rich legacy of anecdotic winter pastime paintings

and many wonderful scenes with colf players. For this was the end of a typical Dutch phenomenon characterised by landscapes being the subject of the painting itself and naturalistically illustrated in all aspects. For golf historians it has left a great source for further research of the game of colf, its equipment and the way the people played this game in the Low Countries. Undoubtedly, it shows a close relationship with the game of golf we know it today that developed in Scotland.

Hendrick Averkamp (1585–1634) considered one of the greatest masters of the Golden Age. Although held in high esteem for his art, we did not know much about him for a long time. His work usually

sold under his nickname ‘the Mute of Kampen’. It was usual to think that this name referred to his tacit nature and modesty as well to his solitary lifestyle. Only later, people recognised that Averkamp was deaf and that this handicap was the cause of his isolated position in the community.

Shortly after his birth in Amsterdam, he moved with his parents to Kampen, where his father was the town apothecary. After an apprenticeship with Pieter Isaacs in Amsterdam, he returned to Kampen in about 1613 where he remained until his death. We do not know a lot known about his life in Kampen. Lacking the ability to hear or speak, he most probably lived with his mother who took care of him. Kampen was not a vibrant artistic centre as Amsterdam was in those days. There were a few painters settled there of whom Averkamp became the most renowned.

His nephew Barent Averkamp became an apprentice and followed his uncle’s style closely. As a member of a learnt family, we can assume that Hendrick Averkamp probably learnt to communicate by lip-reading, gesturing, reading and writing. He was especially close to his brother Peter Averkamp, an apothecary in Kampen like their father. We think that on several occasions Averkamp portrayed himself with his brother playing the game of colf in the favourite ice scenes.

Climates are subject to great change. We know before the Little Ice Age, there was a warm period from 1000 to 1300. We refer to this as the Medieval Warm Period, when Greenland had thriving settlements on its southern coast and grapes were commonly cultivated in northwestern parts of Europe. Winters could still be severe but this was sporadic. Changes in the earth’s orbit, the distance to the sun and level of solar activity result in moving ocean currents to cause changes in our climate. In this sense, the Little Ice Age was a global phenomenon. Especially in the Low Countries that were hard hit by decades of severe winters. The winters affected everyday life including water and food supplies and even people freezing to death. Ordinary transport over water, essential in the Low Countries, became almost impossible. Average temperatures were two to three degrees



*Colf players on ice near Haarlem (1608),
by Adriaen van der Velde (The National Gallery)*

Celsius lower than today. However, snow and ice also created opportunities for a lot of fun and play. Sledging, skating and various games were played on ice, with the most being colf. These ice scenes inspired many artists such as Hendrick Averkamp. The painting of ice scenes and winter landscapes helped to stimulate hugely the popularity of these works with the public. Many popular subjects were even copied a number of times. Winter landscape artists obviously concentrated on the fun part of winter but could not obscure the bitter hardship and severity of the freezing cold. In general, it was even possible during these cold winters to cross the Zuyder Zee from Kampen to Amsterdam over the ice.

In the sixteenth century, the southern Netherlands formed the centre of the flourishing economic and



Colf players on ice, by Aert van der Neer

cultural life of the Low Countries. Cities like Brugge, Gent, Antwerp and Brussels formed the heart of the

Flemish Renaissance. The eventual fall of Antwerp to Spain forced hundreds of Protestant Flemish artists, merchants and intellectuals to find new homes in the northern Netherlands. There they found a safe haven against Spanish hostilities and the Catholic oppression in the south directed from the Royal Brussels Court of the Spanish-Habsburgers.

In the seventeenth century, the newly founded Republic in the northern Netherlands flourished as never before. Huge economic wealth amassed because of the successful VOC ventures in the East-Indian archipelago centred in Batavia and the continuing dominance of the Dutch fleet at sea. People said that in the Golden Age more than one-third of the world's collected wealth was concentrated in the Republic of the Seven United Provinces of the Netherlands. In the Republic, Amsterdam became the most powerful city measured by wealth and cultural life and stood on the threshold of a new era. In terms of painting Averkamp would become the most acclaimed artist of winter landscapes of his time.

The Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam owns the painting *Winter Landscape with Skaters* by Averkamp painted c1608. This large panel (77 cm x 132 cm) still draws much inspiration from the work of Pieter Brueghel de Oude and shows the extent of Averkamp's debt to the example set by the older artist. The high horizon and the panoramic vantage point are charac-



Winter landscape with colf players in foreground, by Aert van der Neer

teristic. His earlier works are recognisable by the use of gnarled trees on the side as 'repoussoirs' of a décor systematically composed in coulisses. He cleverly creates perspective in his scenes drawing the spectator's eye diagonally into the distance. The large amount of narrative detail and colour made the work of Averkamp popular with the southern immigrants in Amsterdam from Antwerp. There was much correspondence between Brueghel and the early work of Averkamp. Many drawings and prints after Brueghel circulated and became an inspiration for many winter landscape artists in the north. Scenes repeated many times were groups of people playing the hugely popular game of colf on ice. Almost all of Averkamp's paintings of winter landscapes have colf players included in some form or other. Sometimes they form the centrepiece of his composition or they are mere supernumerary actors on the scene. They are mostly well dressed men, wealthy merchants, nobles and officers of the city's citizen soldieries, 'schutterijen'. However, we also see ordinary people and peasants pictured trying their hardest at this most difficult game. We can deduce much from the scenes about how the people played the game of colf.

An overpowering conclusion is that this game did



Winter landscape with ice amusements (1609), by Hendrick Averkamp (Rijksmuseum Amsterdam)

not materially differ from the game of golf developed in Scotland by the various societies in the eighteenth century. There is a clear relationship between this game of colf of the Low Countries and golf played in Scotland, most probably because of the close historic ties, both socio-political and personal, between the two countries.

The illustrations of people depicted by Averkamp carry all the subtle distinctions of social standing, the various occupations and ranks. The figures are key elements in his paintings and created an amus-

ing recognition with the viewers. Other winter landscape painters would concentrate more on the atmosphere of nature and the effects of weather and light conditions. Figures here have more of a secondary role in the overall scene.

In Averkamp's later paintings, the detail of costume and face becomes more important with a dwindling number of figures and less vibrant colouring. Scenes feature broad, frozen waterways and buildings on one side creating a dominant presence. Figures in the foreground become larger and more detailed,



Amusements on ice outside the city walls of Kampen, by Hendrick Averkamp

scattered in groups with their own activities. Scenic devices like trees, shorelines and buildings slowly disappear, replaced by deep viewpoints and a wide expanse of ice stretching into infinity. Surroundings, topographically correct city walls and building constructions replace fantasy landscapes with non-existent castles.

A prime example of this style is *Winter scene outside the Walls of Kampen*, painted by Averkamp in c1614 on a reasonably large panel (45 cm x 72 cm). Here the figures have become the key players and the city walls of his home town Kampen merely becoming a recognisable backdrop. The foreground has several narrative groups of large detailed figures, sharply drawn and creating a contrast with the large number of figures in the background disappearing on the horizon and drawn softly and lightly.

Drawing our attention are the large characters in the foreground representing various social classes. Our special attention goes to a four-ball of colf players in the left foreground corner of the scene. From the initials and numerical characters scratched in the paint by Averkamp we can deduce that Hendrik Averkamp (HA) is playing his brother Lambert Averkamp (LA) and that Lambert is leading by two strokes. A fifth person, most probably the arbiter acting as scorer of the match, accompanies the group of four players holding on to their colfs. Equally important, the arbiter carries with him a jar filled with strong spirits, most likely Dutch jenever, a popular distillate made from grain and the juniper-berry. This softened the hardship of biting cold and missed shots.

One of the players is holding up his glass filled with the salutatory liquid and gives cheer to the opponents next shot aimed at the target post held by the foreman acting as the marker.

Unfortunately, Averkamp has hardly ever showed a colf player in full swing but always at address position. At address, a colf player would always position one of his feet to the back to create a better balance on the slippery ice when swinging at and hitting the ball. Players would only have a single colf to use, being a multi-purpose club for the long shots, the short approach and the putting game. Clubs for the game of colf were commonly made of ash, a strong but flexible type of wood, made heavier and strengthened with a shoe of lead wrapped around the club head. Balls were usually sewn leather balls filled with animal hair.

Many innkeepers would move their business to the ice, setting up large canvas tents from sailing ships decorated with the red white and blue tricolour flags, symbol of the new Republic. The citizens of the Republic were chauvinistic and proud of their new identity. They were also proud of their new Dutch nation's achievements during the uprising and struggle against Spanish domination in the



Colf players on the ice (c1620), by Hendrick Averkamp

Eighty Year War (1568-1648). And of course, they were proud of the leadership of William I of Orange and his sons Maurits and Frederik Hendrik. Other tents were gathering points of various groups or societies like 'schutterijen' marked by their own colours, banners and standards besides the red white and blue. Innkeepers' tents would be recognisable by the traditional wooden barrel or garland hanging from a post from the top.

In one painting *Colf Players on the Ice* (c1625) Averkamp places full attention and emphasis on the figures. The artist depicts colf players and spectators in the near foreground at eye height. This creates a suggestion of the viewer also standing on the ice nearby the players, forming a silhouette against the background with a low horizon. From the red bearded face, we

can infer that this is again a self-portrait of Hendrik Averkamp playing colf with his brother.

Shown clearly in the background is a foreman as marker holding the post as a target for the players. If no foreman with a post was available, players used poles sticking in the ice, or small rowing boats, now stuck in the frozen ice, as a target. Often the wooden boats would create an extra hazard to hit over towards the target or even inside as the target itself. A regular spectator in Averkamp's colf player scenes is the fisherman with his typical red woollen cap and ice axe, with his young son holding on to a fishing net. A third person, acting as an arbiter and scorer of the match accompanies the two players.

Averkamp cleverly depicts the winter amusements and diversions of the people. People from all social layers in life are present in his compositions. Social barriers are not crossed, however, as it shows there is no contact between the various class groups, each busy with their own amusements or other activities. Sometimes he depicted more than a hundred figures in his paintings and several of these figures appear repeatedly in his scenes. In the ice scenes of seventeenth century winter landscape paintings in the Low Countries, artists have depicted no other game than colf so often.

Averkamp on occasion hilariously shows in slapstick style that skating itself was not an easy thing. With women slipping and sliding, falling as their skirts fly up to reveal their naked pink coloured bottoms or young men trying to hit the ball with their colf while skating and falling flat on their bloodied noses.



Colf player, drawing by Hendrick Averkamp

“Harmen Hooch-hart, die soo weyts reyten en snort,
Die haeckten in heur schaats, soo dat de goet-hart stort,
En viel een harde smack, o dat ik mij niet doot lach,
Wangt sy vil op haer neus, soo datmer ael-korf bloot sach.”

[Harmen Haughty, whirring and skating so widely,
Hooked into Moortje's skates, so the poor girl fell.
She crashed so hard, that I laughed to death,
For she fell on her nose, so one could see her naked
bare bottom (literally her eel-basket...)]

The slipperiness and treacherousness of ice stood symbol for the unpredictability and transience of life itself. There are also a few drawings known to be made by Hendrick Averkamp depicting men at the game of colf similar to the painted illustrations but giving a clearer outline of the composition and details. *Ice Scene with a Hunter Showing an Otter* shows the image of two colf players and one assistant tending the target post – the ‘buut’. A second fine example is *Colf on the Ice on the River IJssel near Kampen*. Looking at each colf used by the players in these two Averkamp drawings it could be that these are “Schotse klieken” as referred to in a poem by Six van Chandelier or other texts in the Low Countries.

The use of the old-Dutch word ‘kliek’ creates some



Ice scene near a brewery (c1612), by Hendrick Averkamp

confusion as this word means ‘iron hook’. It is possible the use of the word ‘kliek’ refers to club makers in Scotland, where craftsmen belonging to the guild of archery made clubs. Bow and arrow makers in Scotland had an advanced knowledge on how to use jointed wood and forged iron arrowheads. Early clubs in Scotland were wooden clubs. They were all wooden

with a shallow face. It appears that Averkamp has depicted these in the two drawings. The clubs pictured by Averkamp appear to be the shallow faced long-nosed wooden clubs from Scotland the Dutch named ‘kliek’ or specifically a ‘Schotse kliek’. We do not know why the Dutch used the term ‘kliek’ or even ‘Schotse kliek’. Most probably, a synonym for



Ice scene with a hunter showing an otter, drawing by Hendrick Averkamp

the word 'colf' in Dutch was 'kliek' because of the hooked shape of the colf and the metal shoe of the club head. It could also just be an onomatopoeic. The terminology of the new game of kolf still being played in Holland today uses the word kliek for the play club. There is no documentation yet found about the import of Scottish golf clubs into the Low Countries or the later Republic. There is iconographic proof of the existence of all-wooden clubs on a few paintings by Dutch masters. Unfortunately, the paintings do not give any clue about the clubs origins, or indeed, if they came from Scotland.

A huge amount of documentary evidence does exist on the export of leather balls, made in the Low Countries, to Scotland for golf. Despite similar evidence of protective tax measures in Scotland to stem the ever-growing flow of imported balls, there is no evidence about the export to Scotland of the 'colfven' made in the Low Countries or northern Netherlands. The explanation could well be the relative easy and low volume production of clubs undertaken by local craftsmen in Scotland and the Low Countries. However, the economic supply of leather balls, of good quality and in sufficient volume was historically scarce. Dutch makers, who had mastered the technique, were already meeting the existing high demand by caets players. Caets was the traditional game of in the Low Countries, the forerunner of the modern game of tennis.

A special category of genre paintings of the Golden Age is the child portraits. More specifically, the portraits made of boys holding a colf in their hand besides the many other toys and attributes. The large number of portrait paintings from this period symbolises the affection between parent and child and more importantly the desired influence of education on the character building and individuality of the child. In these portraits, artists were able to picture and idealise the child being without losing the sense of reality. The many painted attributes were metaphors for a good education. 'Tucht baert vrucht' [discipline bears fruit] as the poet Jacob Cats summarised the positive result of a proper upbringing. A sitting dog is emblematic for discipline. Therefore, the visual effects of these many metaphors found their way into the child portraits. Indeed fruit symbolises the result of a good education, a hobby horse or a bridle, control and self-restraint by the child. Flowers point at the transience of youth and beauty. Chosen colour combinations in the painted portraits are an expression of harmony as clearly shown in the works Jan Anthonisz van Ravesteyn where the child was often proudly adorned with the golden insignia of his potent father. The many symbols and features underscore the preoccupation of parents with the well-being and upbringing of their children. Society looked to parents and held them responsible for any



Golf on the ice on the river Yssel near Kampen, drawing by Hendrick Avercamp

misbehaviour of their children. Again as Jacob Cats stated:

*'Indien de jonckheyt niet en deugt,
En geef de schuld niet aan de jeugt,
De vader verdient selfs de straf
Die haer geen beter les en gaf'*

[If the child misbehaves
Do not blame the youth
The father himself deserves punishment
Who did not teach them better.]

The humanist Erasmus was a strong proponent of the central role of education of children in marriage, the cornerstone of society. The Latin school, for which Erasmus' work *De Civilitate* became the guiding principle, was indispensable for ambitious parents wishing an academic education for their children.

The portrait by Ravesteyn of the boy with a colf in his hand presents a whole series of other familiar characters. The boy is wearing a nicely decorated costly ceremonial dress and hat. He is standing beside a chair and prominently showing a golden medallion and chain diagonally hanging over his breast. In his hand, he holds a colf and a leather ball lies at his feet. The colf in his right-hand has a black-and-white leather grip, harmoniously matching the colours of his dress, hat and even the obediently sitting dog. On the chair, a hobby horse and two drumsticks are included as play toys.

All features are realistic but have a symbolic purpose such as the parrot standing for studiousness and eagerness to learn. Sometimes a later addition of a bird on the hand of a child was a message the portrayed child had meanwhile passed away. This was a common sorrowful event at the time. Many children

did not live to the age of ten years. Ravesteyn was a renowned portraitist of the higher social classes in The Hague. The parallels with his other portrait of the child Joannes de Ruyter are remarkable. For recognition purposes, the artist sometimes supplied extra information in the portrait such as the family coat of arms, the date of the portrait, the age of the child or even the family name. The clothes worn by the child helped the viewer find out the child's sex. Confusingly young boys would have long hair and wear a dress too, but with subtle differences if compared to the girls' dress, like the lace collar or apron. Features too, such as a doll or a colf, give away the female or male sex of the portrayed child. Sometimes the portraits of young boys of only two to three years old showed them holding a colf. Clearly, this was too young an age to be playing the game of colf and the attribute had purely a symbolic value and most probably gave away the father's passion for this popular game too. Certain features were status symbols depending on the class and standing of the parents in society. Unfortunately, the identity of many child portraits has been lost overtime taking away a degree of historic value of the painting.

Of interest is a portrait of a young two-year-old boy by a long-time unknown artist, although now credited to Adriaen van der Linde, it has some similarities to the other works of Jan Claesz. Formerly, historians thought the young boy to represent Henry Frederick, Prince of Wales, and the son of King James VI of Scotland, crowned King James I of England and Ireland in 1603. The basis for this supposition, stated in Robert Browning's *A History of Golf* (1955), is the matching date of birth and the age of the portrayed child included in the painting. The portrait bears the date '1595' and the legend 'Aetas 2'.

Prince Henry Frederick, born in 1593 was also two years old in 1595. The close ties between the Royal



Young boy (unknown) with a club and ball (c1630), by Jan Anthonisz. van Ravesteyn

House of Stuart and the House of Orange in Holland would be a reason to consider this portrait as a gift by Stadtholder Maurits, Prince of Orange, to King James VI. James' royal two-year-old son portrayed as a symbol of good friendship between Scotland and the newly established United Republic of the Netherlands. In a sense, we can consider the infant prince a protégé of the Dutch Protestant nation closely tied to the Scottish by the bond of a common religion and national purpose.

Ambassadors of the Provinces of Holland and Zeeland presented the young prince at his christening in the Chapel Royal of Stirling Castle with substantial

monetary gifts as an undertaking to keep the prince 'in pocket money'. Gifts included two fair and large cups of gold, a golden coffer containing a 'letter of obligation to pay the prince during his lifetime 5,000 guilderings yearly'. A portrait of the prince in traditional Dutch style and dress as a gift in this context is conceivable.

Therefore, the portrait in Holdenby House in England, once owned by the Stuarts, was traditionally asserted to be of one of the Royal Family of Scotland. The assertion may be wrong and perhaps was based more on wishful thinking and a fervent belief that the old game of golf spread from the Low Countries



Portrait of Joannes de Ruyter (1632), by Jan Anthonisz. van Ravesteyn

to Scotland. Nevertheless, we now know the child in the portrait is Maurits de Héraugières, the son of nobleman captain Charles de Héraugières.

The captain became a national hero of the Republic by taking the city of Breda in Brabant from the Spaniards in 1590 after secretly entering the city using a turf barge, 'de turfschip van Breda'. Breda was a symbolically important citadel of the Orange-Nassau family. F.M. Janiçon described the event in *De Republiek der Vereenigde Nederlanden*, published in 1736 on behalf of Stadtholder Prince Maurits. The portrayed son, named after the Stadtholder, proudly bears the golden medallion awarded by Prince Maurits to his father for bravery to commemorate the daring military action by De Héraugières, who was after that appointed Governor of Breda. The medallion reads: 'Breda a Servitute Hispanica vindicate, ductu principis Maurittii a Nassau. 4 Martii 1590 – Parati vincere aut mori'. [Breda freed from Spanish Suppression by Maurits of Nassau – Be prepared to win or die].

Breda was lost again to the Spaniards in 1625 by the young Frederik Hendrik, Prince of Orange, having succeeded his half-brother Maurits as Stadtholder of the Republic. This loss marked the turning point of the Republic's military strategy against Spain and led to final victory in the Eighty Year War.

Another well-known child portrait is that of an unidentified boy in a traditionally coloured light blue dress by Bartholomeus van der Helst *Child playing Golf* of c1650, previously credited to Albert Cuyp. It is a portrayal with a characteristically patriotic scene. The tall sailing ships in the background represent



Boy with colf and leather ball (1595), by Adriaen van de Linde (1595). The boy is Maurits de Héraugières, but was formerly believed to be Henry Frederick, Prince of Wales (1594-1612), son of King James I (reproduction)

the Dutch naval dominance at sea and the hugely successful operations of the VOC. The boy is wearing a beautifully decorated light blue dress and feathers on a traditional black hat. On his sleeves, the traditional colours of red white and blue combined with an orange ribbon feature, symbolising his father's strong affection to the Dutch Republic and the ruling Orange-Nassau family.

The Utrecht portraitist Paul Moreelse (1571-1638) was another member of the elite group of well-known painters of the Renaissance art of the Dutch Golden Age, characterised by three main genres, landscapes, still life and portraits. Moreelse received important commissions from the Stadtholders court and other noble patrons. We know him well for his portrait of an unknown boy with colf and ball. The many child portraits with colf and ball attributes give a valuable detailed iconographic evidence of the shape and build of the colf used in the popular game in the Low Countries.

A colf was usually made of ash with a colfslof made of lead wrapped around the club head. This had two purposes. Firstly to make the colf heavier and to improve the swing weight and club head speed. Secondly to protect the club head from damage caused by the blow against the ball or ground. The colfslof had a triangular cross-section with a flat faced hit-



Portrait of a four-year old boy with club and ball (1611), by Paulus Moreelse

ting area and a slightly rounded backside. The leaden colfslof often had decoration with marks or figures. The game of colf was a single club game played over a long-distance needing a full swing at the ball directed towards a distant target. On approaching the target, short game scoring skills were wanted. Many leaden colfshoes have been excavated from shipwrecks, such as the sunken VOC ships *Kennemerland* and the *Lastdrager* on their way to the Dutch colonies in Asia or America.

Only leaden colfshoes have been recovered from the shipwrecks as the wooden shafts decayed in the silted seawater. An archaeological find of the unidentified *Biddinghuizer colfschip* in the polders of the IJsselmeer (previously Zuider Zee) has unearthed more than one colf complete with shaft, leather grip and leaden colfslof. Found material matches the plentiful iconographic images from the well-known landscape or portrait paintings of the Low Countries.

No one has ever found a colf or colfslof of this type in Scotland. There is only evidence of large quantities of stuffed leather balls exported from the Low Countries to Scotland used for the indigenous game of golf in Scotland. In itself, this is remarkable knowing there was no shortage of sheep in Scotland and the importance of the wool and hides products exported from Scotland to staple towns such as Brugge, Veere and Rotterdam in the Low Countries.

We know the Scottish bow makers made their own golf clubs for local use. These were mostly all-wooden clubs. Club makers also produced wooden shafts

fitted with a forged iron heads by using the available blacksmiths knowledge and skills in making forged iron sockets for arrowheads. There is evidence from iconographic images and documents that players in the Low Countries in the seventeenth century used these Scottish wooden clubs, referring to them as 'Schotse kliek'. However, there is no evidence that a systematic export of Scottish wooden clubs to the Low Countries had taken place. Therefore, the occasional 'kliek' referred to in literature or painted in a landscape scene is the result of an incidental purchase or gift from one of the many Scottish relationships during the Golden Age.

This gives support to the theory the Scots developed their own game of golf and equipment from the stick and ball game the invaders from Flanders took with them to Britain. As allies of the Normans, the Flemish came from Flanders to take part in the invasion, conquest and occupation of England after the Battle of Hastings in 1066 led by the Norman leader, William the Conqueror, Duke of Normandy. William, married to Matilda, Duchess of Flanders, was himself the bastard son of Harlewa of Falaise, who was of old Carolingian descent. He became King William I of England after his successful conquest of England. The following account by David Baeckelandt explains the Flemish presence in Britain starting after the Norman Conquest: 'A Flemish connection to the British Isles of course did not surface overnight. Flemings have been recorded as resident in England at least since the so-called "Norman" invasion of 1066. The Flemings in fact were the key component that swung the tide in favour of William the Conqueror. Flemings immediately were involved in subduing the British Isles for William and were awarded fiefs, especially in Scotland (Alba) where they adopted names such as Stirling, Graham and Malet. Other Flemish nobles, who assumed Scottish fiefs along with Scottish surnames included Bruce, Bethune, Buchan, Lindsay, Lyle, and Stewart.

Records of trade between Flanders and its neighbours England and Scotland are recorded as early as 1066. Those strong, early trade relations were manifested in the first recorded example of countries signing a treaty recognising their respective flags. Successive waves of Flemings arrived in England at the invitation of English monarchs in every subsequent century.

Starting a precedent that would frequently be copied by his successors, William's son Henry I enticed and incited a large colony of Flemings to occupy Mailros in England and later Haverford in Pembrokeshire in southwestern Wales. This area retained a distinctive, Flemish-influenced dialect until modern times.

Henry I's son Stephen I added more Flemings to the realm. Some worked as builders in Carlisle and oth-





Feast of Saint St Nicholas (1663), by Jan Steen (Rijksmuseum Amsterdam)

left: Child playing colf, by Bartholomeus van der Helst, formerly believed to be by Aelbert Cuyp

ers as mercenaries under William of Ypres. Although later, Henry II later saw them as a threat and banished them to their relatives in Wales. A Welsh Queen, Nest ferch-Rhys, even had a child by a Flemish settler there in the twelfth century. Her progeny are claimed to include “half of Wales”.

Further Flemish immigration came as early as 1169, in response to an appeal to the ‘normanised’ English by a warring Irish King. Also later, in the thirteenth century, immigrants arrived most notably as mercenaries in Ireland. These men carved out a fief on the eastern coast of Ireland, near Waterford, in the baronies called Forth and Bargo, almost on a direct line across from Pembroke in Wales. The Flemish settlers kept themselves separate to the extent that residents not only continued to use a Flemish-derived dialect at least until the early nineteenth century but also supplied many emigrants to America starting in 1840. Common names from the Forth and Bargo region with Flemish ancestry include Gifford, Stafford, Jenkins and Seys.

Better known and more often cited are the droves of Flemish weavers that Edward III resettled in Bristol and Manchester as well as the traditional Flemish



The battle of Hastings and the death of King Harold (1066), Bayeux tapestry depicting the Norman Conquest of England

refuge in East Anglia the first half of the fourteenth century. In each of these venues, the new immigrants not only added to England’s burgeoning cloth making but set the stage for a boom in trade. For example, the Flemish contribution pushed Bristol into



William the Conqueror

the forefront of British overseas trade from the late fourteenth century well up to the early seventeenth century. In fact the Flemish were so prominent a presence throughout the British Isles that it was claimed that the Flemish “formed the seventh race in the island”.

Children in a doorway with a colf (c1659), by Pieter de Hoogh